



# Westhampton Public Library

## CASE STUDY

### BACKGROUND

In the early 2000s, Westhampton voted unanimously to build a larger, more sustainable library and to repurpose the old library for office space. The project received a \$1.064 million grant from the [Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners](#) (MBLC), and Westhampton residents banded together to aggregate the remaining funds needed through resources and fundraising over a period of several years.

Prior to the building grant, Westhampton received \$20,000 from the MBLC to plan the new library, which the town matched. The library also received a grant from Western Massachusetts Electric Company for \$19,000 to go above and beyond building codes in terms of efficiency, allowing the local Library Building Committee to upgrade the heating and plumbing and pick top performing windows, insulation, and appliances. Westhampton's Library Building Committee worked with the Smith College Engineering Department to maximize solar gain from the layout of windows on the new addition, which was also built with south-facing roofs for future installation of a solar photovoltaic (PV) system. In April of 2009, the final plans were released and Westhampton sought bids to build the new addition. The library opened the fall of 2011, before its actual completion in the spring of 2012.

### ACTIONS

- ◆ Repurposed a 200-year-old 1,200 square foot parsonage donated by the Friends of the Westhampton Library as part of the new library that now covers 5,400 square feet combined
- ◆ Included plans for solar PV system of 14.49 kW capacity
- ◆ Raised the funds over 10 years to build and update the library independent of town revenue, relying on donations and federal and state energy efficiency grants and incentives
- ◆ Inspired to make the library the best it could be, the approximately 400 volunteers who participated in completing the library put a priority on clean, safe, and energy efficient choices

Incorporated in 1762, [Westhampton](#) has a population of just under 1,500 with a total land area of 27.3 square miles.

### Community Engagement

The community's willingness to fundraise was critical to the completion of Westhampton's new sustainably-built library, and also gave the community a greater stake in the outcome of the project. The Westhampton Public Library doubles as a community center, with rooms for activities from knitting to movies. The building earned a gold LEED certification, dozens of points higher than the baseline certification necessary to qualify for a Green Library Incentive grant from the Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program.

### RESULTS

- ◆ Upon completion, the Westhampton Library met its goal of becoming LEED certified, earning a gold rating and the Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program's [Green Library Incentive](#). Green Library Incentives are meant to help offset the cost of incorporating environmentally-friendly and energy efficient systems and materials in library building projects. Totalling \$100,000, the Green Library Incentive further defrayed Westhampton's own project costs.
- ◆ Westhampton was able to purchase and install the intended solar PV system, which enabled the library to receive its first negative energy bill in June of 2013. Generating more energy than it uses, the library is saving over \$240 per month, with the excess electricity incorporated into the town grid through a net metering contract with Western MA Electric Co.
- ◆ The building's flooring and paint are VOC (volatile organic compound)-free, improving air quality. All new flooring is local hardwood and the old parsonage flooring was sanded and refinished, eliminating the need for new wood.
- ◆ The new shelving is also manufactured and assembled in Massachusetts, and is made from 30 percent recycled materials. The library saved thousands of dollars by choosing furniture that is repurposed locally in Holyoke and Springfield.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Phillip Dowling of Westhampton's Library Building Committee noted that "assembling a good team is essential to a successful project." For example, Westhampton hired a project manager specifically to handle the paperwork involved in the execution of LEED certification. As advice to municipalities considering similar projects, Dowling also suggested building flexibility into the planning process to allow for installation of cleaner energy systems that may be more expensive upfront, but will save money down the line. He also pointed to how invaluable the community was in the culmination of efforts, as each member became personally invested in building the new library while simultaneously building new relationships. "To say that it's more than a library is an understatement," said Dowling. "We created a real sense of community ownership."